

*Government Orders*

On July 1, 1987 the Prime Minister and the premier of British Columbia signed a memorandum of understanding which committed the two governments to negotiate an agreement to establish a national marine park in the South Moresby area of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

On July 12, 1988 the two governments signed a formal memorandum of agreement setting out specific commitments regarding the parks and related initiatives.

Signing of that agreement was the culmination of a 13-year struggle by the Haïda and environmentalists, supported by church organizations and others, both nationally and internationally, to protect the area from logging and mining.

In 1985 the Haïda and their supporters blockaded logging on Lyell Island leading to the arrest of 72 Haïda, including elders, and focusing national and international attention on South Moresby. Agreement to protect South Moresby was greeted by Canadians as one of the most important environmental accomplishments of the government in its first term.

Setting aside the park reserve will protect internationally significant heritage resources. Parts of the area were not glaciated during the last ice age, resulting in the evolution of unique plants and animals—hence the area's common description as the Canadian Galapagos. Moreover, South Moresby represents a rich cultural heritage.

The abandoned Haïda village of Ninstints, for example, was designated by UNESCO in 1981 as a world heritage site for its array of totems and other cultural remains; two other village sites in the vicinity have been declared of national historical significance. In recognition of these factors, the name Gwaii Haanas Archipelago National Park Reserve has been selected, meaning "islands of wonder and beauty".

The federal-provincial agreement sets the boundaries of the 147,000 hectare national park reserve. The boundaries of the national marine park reserve, however, will not be finalized before an assessment of the mineral and energy resource potential of the area, and a decision by the federal and provincial ministers this December. Therefore, Bill C-59 deals only with the land reserve.

Since the beginning of the initiative to set aside the national park reserve it has been evident that an understanding with the Haïda would be needed to ensure the effective management of the area. An all-party resolution of the House of Commons on May 14, 1987 stated "that the House confirms its intention to ensure the continued participation of the Haïda people in matters affecting South Moresby".

Moreover, in his remarks at the signing of the MOU in 1987 with the province the Prime Minister stated: "South Moresby is more than an ecological treasure. It is also the spiritual heart of "Haïda Gwaii", the homeland of the Haïda. The Haïda community will be involved in a meaningful way in park planning, development and operation".

Therefore Environment Canada began discussions with the Haïda in 1987 regarding a mechanism for co-operation in the management of the archipelago and the continuation of traditional Haïda activities.

As a result of these commitments the Haïda did not oppose the idea of a national park reserve which would stop the logging and at the same time not prejudice their position on ownership.

For this reason and in keeping with past practice elsewhere, a reserve for a national park will be set aside pending resolutions of outstanding disputes over rights, titles, interests in and to the area.

Formal negotiations with the Haïda on co-operation with the management of the archipelago began early in 1988.

Unfortunately, talks have broken off from time to time giving the differing views of the parties on sovereignty over the lands. However, eventually the parties agreed to set out their different views in the areas of dispute and to concentrate on those issues where there was agreement, principally the protection and conservation of the unique ecology of the area and the continuation of the Haïda culture and activities within it.

With that deadlock broken, the negotiations led to a draft agreement in April 1990. The agreement was subsequently ratified by the Haïda in a referendum held by the Council of the Haïda Nation on May 19, 1990. The principal components of the agreement are as follows: